



AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

1920 L Street, NW • Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20036  
202.785.0266 • Fax 202.785.0261

# NEWS

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CONTACT: Jonathan Collegio  
David W. Kralik  
202-785-0266

22 FEBRUARY 2002

## Unions Project Mandatory Member Fee for Political Interests

WASHINGTON — Facing an election year, the AFL-CIO has raised less than \$8 million of an estimated \$35 million needed to keep Democrats in control of Congress. To bridge the financial gap putting the party at risk, the federation is proposing to charge members a mandatory fee for permanent funding of political interests.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney will propose a new budget next week “that will shift resources into our priority programs, while reducing staff and other expenses. These priorities are politics and organizing,” he said in a letter to the AFL-CIO’s executive council.

Despite the newly passed campaign-finance legislation, which will ban “soft” money contributions from labor unions and corporations into the national political parties, changes will likely not apply to this year’s elections, so unions can still demand political money from members. Union officials justify the charges by deeming this “a critical year” struggling to protect the Democrats one seat majority in the Senate, and only a few seats preventing them from controlling the House.

Taxpayer advocate Grover Norquist, who heads Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington, called the measure a “massive cash grab,” and said “the AFL-CIO is finally showing its true colors to its members: the union is not dedicated to its members, but to playing a brand of politics to which many workers would object.”

The unions have spent \$110 to \$130 million over the past three election cycles, without capturing control of Congress until Vermont senator James Jeffords became an independent. **Gerald McEntee, the AFL-CIO political chairman stresses more effective ways to deal with the federation’s political problems: stepping back and encouraging union members to seek office, or contributing independently to campaigns.**

Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union agreed, “The AFL has to accentuate that they are interested in issues. But I think there are a lot of people that would still like us to be an adjunct to the Democratic party.”

And final plans for the mandatory special assessment charge are still being debated because the idea is said to be deepening an already divided labor movement.

“This is just one more example of how Union officials manipulate their powers of representation to achieve personal political agendas,” continued Norquist. **The AFL-CIO is not a political party, and by demanding money from members to pay for Democratic Campaigns they are demonstrating a lack of appeal to the true concerns of all union members.**”

*Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who support tax simplification and oppose all federal and state tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at [jcollegio@atr.org](mailto:jcollegio@atr.org)*